

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 513

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, IS, US

SUBJ: ISRAELI REACTION TO SHEEHAN FOREIGN POLICY ARTICLE

1. EDWARD SHEEHAN'S FOREIGN POLICY ARTICLE "STEP BY STEP IN THE MIDDLE EAST" WAS DISCUSSED IN MARCH 7 CABINET MEETING, BUT SO FAR HAS EVOKED ONLY VERY LIMITED EDITORIAL COMMENTARY.

2. TEXT OF RELEVANT EXCERPT FROM CABINET COMMUNIQUE READS AS FOLLOWS:

QUOTE: IN ANSWER TO THE QUESTIONS OF MINISTERS HAUSNER, KOL AND BURG CONCERNING THE REPORT IN JOURNALIST EDWARD SHEEHAN'S ARTICLE, ACCORDING TO WHICH U.S. PRESIDENTS NIXON AND FORD HAD TOLD PRESIDENT SADAT THAT THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTS ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL TO THE 1967 BORDERS, THE PRIME MINISTER STATED THAT AT HIS REQUEST, ISRAEL'S AMBASSADOR HAD REFERRED AN OFFICIAL QUESTION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND HAD REQUESTED AN OFFICIAL ANSWER. DR KISSINGER RESPONDED THAT HE HAD ALREADY ISSUED FOR PUBLICATION A REACTION ON THIS SUBJECT, TO THE EFFECT THAT THE U.S. POSITION IS BASED ON RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338, ACCORDING TO WHICH

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THE FINAL BORDERS MUST BE NEGOTIATED BETWEEN THE PARTIES, AND

AND THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD NO STAND OF ITS OWN AS TO WHERE THE BORDERS SHOULD BE. END QUOTE.

3. MAARIV, WHICH IS CURRENTLY SERIALIZING THE SHEEHAN ARTICLE, WROTE IN ITS EDITORIAL OF MARCH 8: QUOTE PROFESSOR SHEEHAN'S REVELATIONS OF KISSINGER'S DECEIT AND DOUBLE TALK CAN TEACH US LESSONS NOT ONLY ABOUT THE PAST BUT ALSO ABOUT THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE....KISSINGER IS AGAIN TRYING TO BLUR THE PICTURE (FOLLOWING RUMSFELD STATEMENT)....WE SAY 'AGAIN', BECAUSE THIS IS EXACTLY THE PICTURE PAINTED BY KISSINGER TO DINITZ DURING THE CRITICAL DAYS OF THE OCTOBER WAR; THEN ALSO THE DIVISION OF LABOR WAS ARRANGED WITH TERRIBLE CYNICISM--AS SHEEHAN REVEALSISRAEL MUST NOT BE TRAPPED AGAIN BY THE AMERICAN SECRETARY. END QUOTE.

4. JERUSALEM POST EDITORIALIST, NOTING THAT SECRETARY WAS "THUNDERSTRUCK" BY SHEEHAN REVELATION, OBSERVED THAT SOME ISRAELIS ALSO MAY HAVE BEEN THUNDERSTRUCK "BY THE DISCLOSURE THAT AMERICAN LEADERS HAVE BEEN MAKING COMPLETELY CONTRADICTORY PLEDGES TO ARAB AND ISRAELI LEADERS...THE ATTEMPT BY THE STATE DEPT. SPOKESMAN TO EXPLAIN THE CONTRADICTION AWAY BY INSISTING THAT THE U.S. REMAINS LOYAL TO THE PRINCIPLE OF NEGOTIATION ENSHRINED IN RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 WILL IMPRESS NO ONE IN ISRAEL. IF ANYTHING, IT READS LIKE A CLEAR ADMISSION THAT THE PROMISES MADE TO SADAT AND ASAD ARE IN CONTRAVENTION OF RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338. BUT THEN SO, IN A LARGE SENSE, WAS THE OLD ROGERS PLAN, WHICH OFFICIAL WASHINGTON NEVERTHELESS CLAIMED, TO ITS SATISFACTION, DID NOT REPRESENT ANY ATTEMPT AT AN IMPOSED SOLUTION. FOR IF ISRAEL CAN BE NUDGED POWERFULLY ENOUGH TO ACCEPT NEAR TOTAL WITHDRAWAL--IN RETURN FOR SUCH GUARANTEES AS THE U.S. ELECTS TO DISPENSE--THEN THE PLAN BECOMES ISRAELI... PERHAPS THERE IS NO REASON FOR ISRAEL TO BE THUNDERSTRUCK, AFTER ALL".

5. COMMENT: SHEEHAN ARTICLE MAY PROVOKE SOME HARSH DISCUSSION IN THE KNESSET AND ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY IN ISRAELI PRESS. HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT THERE HAS BEEN RELATIVELY LITTLE REACTION TO DATE SUGGESTS THAT THE SUPPOSED REVELATIONS OF DIFFERENCES IN U.S. AND ISRAELI APPROACHES TO THE TERRITORIAL ISSUES COME AS NO SURPRISE TO MOST ISRAELIS. WE EXPECT THAT SHEEHAN ARTICLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WILL BE READ HERE AS CONFIRMATION OF DEEPLY HELD SUSPICIONS OF THOSE OPPOSED TO WITHDRAWALS, BUT IT IS UNLIKELY TO HAVE MUCH IMPACT ON ALIGNMENT OF FORCES BETWEEN MODERATES AND HARDLINERS. TOON

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